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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEBRASKANS TO BE ABLE TO DIAL 8-1-1 TO CONTACT DIGGERS HOTLINE

LINCOLN – After April 13, 2007 all Nebraskans will be able to dial a three-digit telephone number to call before they dig on public or private property in an effort to prevent interruption of utility service. The Nebraska Public Service Commission on Tuesday designated 8-1-1 to facilitate statewide access to the Diggers Hotline. Previously, the Diggers Hotline was accessible only by dialing a toll-free 10-digit number. The 8-1-1 number will also be toll-free.

In 1994, Nebraska placed a requirement on all excavators to seek assistance in locating underground utility infrastructure prior to digging. The one-call notification center, located in Omaha, serves all of Nebraska. Callers must contact the center at least two business days prior to digging to allow utility providers sufficient time to locate and mark their underground facilities.

Second District Commissioner Anne Boyle of Omaha said, “Today we designated one of the few remaining three-digit public interest numbers. Doing so will improve safety relative to excavations in Nebraska, reduce service interruptions and prevent damage to underground utility equipment.” Other three-digit numbers utilized in Nebraska are: 2-1-1 for First Call for Help, a referral to community based and health and human services; 4-1-1 for directory assistance; 5-1-1 for road conditions; 6-1-1 for repair service used by many phone companies; 7-1-1 for connection to telecommunications services for the hearing impaired and; 9-1-1 for emergency services. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has reserved 3-1-1 to cities for local government use, including use for non-emergency police matters, to eliminate multiple numbers for city services, and to improve efficiency.

Boyle said the requirement to contact the Diggers Hotline call center extends to those who may want to landscape or dig on property for any other reason. Statistically, most service interruptions are a result of landscaping or yard work by people using a spade most of whom failed to contact the Diggers Hotline.

The designation of 8-1-1 became possible by action of the FCC on March 14, 2005. The Nebraska Commission conducted a workshop on the issue on December 2, 2005 to identify problems and concerns with implementation. As a result of the workshop, the Commission adopted the same implementation date set by the FCC, April 13, 2007.

The 8-1-1 number will apply to both landline and wireless telephone users. Telephone companies must include instructions on 8-1-1 dialing in directories published after April 1, 2007.

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